"Who Deported More Immigrants? Trump, Obama, or the Media?"

The perception that Donald Trump was the ultimate deportee, responsible for tearing families apart and ramping up ICE raids, has been perpetuated by the media. From the beginning of his administration, Trump's stance on immigration was framed as both controversial and cruel. The media focused on his aggressive rhetoric, such as calling immigrants from Latin America "criminals" and labeling their countries as "shitholes." However, the question remains: Was Trump's approach more deportation-heavy than that of previous presidents, such as Barack Obama? A closer examination of government data reveals a more nuanced reality.

According to data from the **Department of Homeland Security (DHS**) and **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)**, President Barack Obama deported more individuals than any other U.S. president—approximately 3.2 million people over his two terms (2009-2017). In comparison, President Donald Trump's deportations numbered around 935,000 during his four-year tenure (2017-2021). These statistics alone might suggest that the Obama administration was more assertive in its deportation policies; however, the narrative extends beyond these figures.

While Obama's numbers are higher, the way his administration handled deportations is essential. Obama primarily focused on deporting those apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border, using technology-driven systems like Secure Communities, which helped local law enforcement identify individuals to be turned over to ICE. These deportations, although high in volume, were less visible to the public.

Trump, on the other hand, shifted the focus of enforcement. He made ICE raids in the interior of the U.S. a public spectacle. He increased the visibility of enforcement actions by targeting sanctuary cities and prioritizing the enforcement of family separations under the "zero tolerance" policy. While the total number of deportations under Trump was smaller, his rhetoric and public policies were far more visible and controversial.

It is essential to acknowledge that deportations during Obama's presidency were also a source of controversy. He earned the nickname **"Deporter-in-Chief"** because of his administration's policies, which included strict interior enforcement and increased border security. His administration also introduced the **DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)** program, designed to protect certain undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children. However, DACA's protections were limited, and Obama's use of deportations damaged the administration's image of defending immigrant rights.

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"Detained at the Border: The Truth About Green Card Searches Under Four Presidents"

In recent years, many U.S. citizens and green card holders have found themselves subject to more invasive border checks. For many, the idea of being detained at the airport—having their phones and social media accounts searched by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents—has become an all-too-familiar experience. This has occurred under multiple administrations, from George W. Bush, who focused heavily on national security post-9/11, to Barack Obama, whose surveillance measures were expanded, to Donald Trump, who made visible enforcement a central issue, and finally to Joe Biden, who, despite his promises of a softer immigration approach, has continued many of the same policies.

The **USA PATRIOT Act** and the creation of the **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** under *President George W. Bush* significantly expanded the authority of federal agencies, such as CBP. The border search exception rule, which allows officers to search your belongings and detain individuals without a warrant, was a tool utilized heavily during this period. Following the 9/11 attacks, there was an increasing focus on securing the U.S. borders from external threats, which led to policies that prioritized security over personal privacy.

Under Barack Obama, this surveillance expanded. Obama's DHS continued the legacy of mass surveillance, particularly through programs like Secure Communities. Though the program was meant to target violent criminals, many non-violent immigrants, including green card holders, found themselves caught in the system. Furthermore, the advent of biometric tracking and facial recognition technology enabled authorities to expand surveillance beyond borders, reaching deeply into the daily lives of travelers and immigrants.

Under Donald Trump, this surveillance was intensified and became much more visible. Trump's administration issued executive orders like Executive Order 13769 (the "Muslim Ban"), which severely restricted travel for citizens of several Muslim-majority countries. Many legal permanent residents (green card holders) were detained, their phones searched, and they were questioned at length about their political affiliations. Trump's harsh rhetoric surrounding immigration, paired with these policy shifts, made the detention of travelers more frequent and more visible. CBP officers were granted extensive powers to review social media posts, emails, and messages, all without any judicial oversight.

Joe Biden's administration, while promising a return to more humane policies, continues to uphold these surveillance practices. The use of facial recognition technology at airports has increased, and although Biden has reversed some of Trump's more aggressive policies, such as the travel bans, the reality of detentions and invasive searches for green card holders has not lessened. Title 42, a public health order allowing the expulsion of immigrants based on health risks, remains a tool of removal, and border searches continue to be a standard part of U.S. immigration enforcement.

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